



Producers First Technical Assistance Available

Release Date: November 11, 2011

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MADISON –Kay Jensen of JenEhr Family Farm in Sun Prairie has been growing organic produce and raising pastured poultry with her husband Paul Ehrhardt for 13 seasons. When Jensen wanted to improve her use of QuickBooks to better manage the farming operation, she applied for technical assistance with Producers First of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). DATCP encourages producers to apply now for Producers First to receive technical assistance needed for their operation.

“In a farming system like ours when you are growing multiple crops, there are dilemmas and opportunities, and I didn’t want to reinvent the wheel to try to bring all the information together in one place,” said Jensen. “By enhancing my knowledge of what QuickBooks could do for the farm with Producers First, I got the full picture of my farm. I was able to see the leaks and fix them to make the best management decisions I could.”

Producers First connects producers with an expert consultant to address the farm operation’s needs to increase capacity, efficiency, and sales. Applicants are able to identify a consultant of their choice who has the experience and expertise needed for the project.

“I was able to work with a consultant I had worked with before who was not only an accountant, but also someone who was familiar with vegetable production,” added Jensen. “Producers First allowed me to improve the financial infrastructure on our farm so I was able to be successful and improve profitability along with better long-term planning.”

Producers First supports one-on-one technical assistance and has a simple application process. Preference will be given to food producers selling a majority of their products through local markets.

Examples of technical assistance provided by Producers First includes: accounting and financial organization, business planning, food safety, grant writing assistance, legal services, market development, packaging and label development, and whole farm planning.

“This project may have been just a one-year project, but it is the beginning of what we hope to be a successful endeavor on the farm,” concluded Jensen. “The discussion of these results has led us to other questions and other things we can do. Producers First has allowed us to get our ducks in a row so we can move where we want to go.”

To apply for Producers First, visit datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy_Local_Buy_Wisconsin/Producers_First/ or contact DATCP’s Keefe Keeley at 608-224-5095 or datcpproducersfirst@wisconsin.gov.

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Kay Jensen of JenEhr Family Farm discusses her experience with Producers First. Through this program, producers are able to work with an expert consultant to address a need in the farm operation to increase capacity, efficiency, and sales.